10: d'Orleans--332-333 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 346, 776, 826

[LSS: in Luang Prabang] "We collect some bivalve fossils as we come down, half-way from the summit, being a covered terrace with a building, inside which is a bath-shaped cavity with five marks supposed to have been made [333] by the foot of Buddha when he traversed the Mekong. This is why it is called Pra bate (1) (foot of God).

1. Bate is the word used for the feet of deities or kings; tine for those of ordinary mortals."

25: Brodrick--96-97 S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians-1-3
116, 776, 769, 782, 823

"Although the people of the Laos are happy-go-lucky and carefree, and their mild and mitigated Little Vehicle Buddhism sits lightly upon them, the spirits are ever-present. Still, to this day, in a country where men are naturally, it seems, hospitable and open-handed, no stranger will be invited until the spirits have given their permission sought by offerings to them of five candles of pure beeswax, five frangipani flowers, five incense-sticks and a bottle of rice-alcohol.

All that happens to hurt man is the work of spirits. For 'primitive' men--and the Laotians, despite their real if rustic civilization, maintain many of the reactions and fundamental beliefs of 'primitives' --disaster, and the greatest of all disasters, death, is not 'normal' or 'natural.' In the Land of the Laos, the p'hi-lok or manes of the ancestors are jealous beings, easy to take offence and these p'hi or spirits and the ho or demons must receive propitiatory sacrifices. There is a similar underlying fear and faith in Cambodia but they are better hid. But in the Laos it may be said that all believe that ghosts come back at night in animal shape to plague the living. In animal shape. The archaic ideas which we tend to label rather too easily as 'totemistic' are all vaguely interwined with feelings rather than definable dogmas, feelings of some close relation between man and other animals.

With the p'hi-lok, who sow terror, and the p'hi phob, or evil spirits, are the numberless demons of the woods and the guardian genii of the wild. The forests are fearsome

places and best avoided. The old travellers told a terrible tale of the Forest of the King of [97] Fire, the Dong-Phaja-Fai, through which you had to climb to reach Korat, (1) and

1. Korat, of course, is in modern Siam, but it is in Laotian land. Mgr. Pellegoix's entertaining Description du Royaume de Siam was published in 1854.

the journey took five whole days. The awful name, alone, of this dread jungle spread terror, and countless wayfarers never came through the deep shades, since as Pellegoix relates, in an effort, doubtless, to rationalize the legends, here and there in this jungle, the earth contains 'mineral arsenic' whose dust the passer-by breathes and with it death.

If the Laotian goes into the jungle, ill may befall him, and surely will if he there spends the night. He may disappear for ever or he may be transported to an enchanted land wherein, for long years he may chase phantoms and illusions and if he manages, at last, to escape from this bewitched realm, when he reaches his hut he will not be recognized by his relations who, having mourned him as dead, have long ceased to think of him and will be most embarrassed and annoyed at his reappearance--or, if he shuns such adventures, he will emerge from the great woods as a sick man, the demons have struck him with malignant fever, dragging him to the grave in a few short days.

25: Brodrick--96-97 S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians-3
116, 776, 769, 782, 823

Picanon told a curious tale of what he experienced, years ago, when he was living on Khone island, right in the south near the Khong cataracts and the Cambodian frontier. After a day of torrential showers and violent storms, in the evening as he was finishing his dinner in his house, two young women ran in upon him and threw themselves trembling at his feet imploring him for aid and for protection. Thinking that some brigand was after the women, Picanon reached for his gun and made to go out on to the veranda, but the girls sobbed to him not to venture forth alone for a p'hi had called to them and cursed them at the very moment they were passing the house. They tottered with him out of the windows and pointed to a bushy mango-tree in a rice-field nearby. On the tree was a bird, luminiferous in the moonlight. It flew screeching away as Picanon fired a charge of shot in its direction, and the women were reassured."

68: Mouhot--95-96 N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians
116, 776, 753, 778

"[HD: At Khao-Khoc, Siam. See category 116, p. 90] The Laotian is as superstitious as the Cambodian, and perhaps more so than the Siamese. If a person falls ill of a fever, or, indeed, is ever so slightly indisposed, they believe it to be owing to a demon who has entered his body. If any matter in which they are engaged goes wrong, or an accident happens when hunting, fishing, or cutting wood, it is the fault of the demon. In their houses they carefully preserve some object, generally a simple piece of wood, or some parasitic plant, whose form they fancy bears a resemblance to some part of the human [96] body; and this is constituted their household god, and prevents evil spirits from entering, or, at least, causes them speedily to depart."

68: Mouhot--99 N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians
116, 776, 823, 789

"I am at the gates of the infernal regions, for so the Laotians and Siamese designate this forest, [HD: i.e. Dong Phya Phia, the forest of the 'King of Fire', between Khao-Khoc and Korat in Siam] and I have no spell to terrify the demons which inhabit it, neither tiger's teeth nor stunted stag-horn; nothing but my faith in and love for God. If I must die here, where so many other wanderers have left their bones, I shall be ready when my hour comes."

68: Mouhot--110 N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians
116, 484, 776, 823, 579

"As for the Laotians, I have found them, although superstitious, very courageous, especially those who traverse this forest [HD: i.e. Dong Phya Phia, the forest of the 'King of Fire', between Khao-Khoc and Korat in Siam] eight or ten times a year. Some of them even venture to awake the 'King of Fire' by bringing down game or shooting at robbers: yet death , even in the best season, carries off one or two out of every ten who travel here. I think the number of those who fall victims to this terrible journey must be considerable in the rainy season, when every torrent overflows its bounds; the whole soil is soaked, the pathways nothing but bogs, and the rice-grounds covered with several feet of water. After five or six days' walking through all this, with feet in the mud, the body in a profuse perspiration, and breathing a fetid atmosphere, hot as a stove and reeking with putrid miasma, what wonder that many sink and die?"

68: Mouhot--112 N-5 (1858-61) 1864
116, 776, 823, 579

"Our guides are all Laotians from the neighbourhood unremitting in his care and attention towards me. Every for the night, levelling the ground and cutting down branc and I am thus raised from the earth and protected from th hard life, tramping in all seasons along these wretched r morning and evening, to swallow a little rice, and having tormented by ants, and exposed to the attacks of robbers, constantly to be on their guard."

of Korat, and their leader is
evening he prepares my place
es which he covers with leaves,
e dew. These guides lead a
ads, having scarcely time,
out little sleep at nights,
against whom they have

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
Moi AM9
M'nong

and we were down to the nursing-mothers, who, removing their babies from the breast and passing them to onlookers, tripped lightly towards us. Although the rice-alcohol, with its queer burnt-cereal taste, was weaker than usual, my friends said, it was beginning to take effect. The Moïs had slipped into an easy-going joviality and the nursing-mothers received some mild familiarities, for which they exchanged good-natured slaps. Their capacity for alcohol, though, was greater than that of the elder ladies, and they were not to be deceived by a mere pretence of drinking on our part. Calling for beakers they sucked up the alcohol, spat libations, syphoned off liquor until the beakers were filled, and presented them to us. Taking stock of the situation we saw that we had drunk our way to within two nursing-mothers of those perfect young representatives of the Polynesian race, the chief's daughters, who flung us occasional glances from between sweeping lashes. But we were all flagging, dizzy with the alcohol and the stunning reverberation of the gongs. And the morning was wearing on. It would have been difficult to imagine our condition by the time we had drunk our way down to an interesting social level. The Moïs encouraged us with smiles and gestures, but we could do no more.

273 574 [832]

It was at a village in the vicinity of Buon Dieo, where two years previously an extraordinary affair had taken place. A family of eight persons were suspected of magic practices to the detriment of the village. According to local custom a representative was chosen as accuser and a trial by ordeal arranged. This consisted of the villagers' champion and the head of the accused family plunging their heads under water, the first to withdraw his head, in this case the accused, being held to have lost the day. According to the rulings of customary law governing this rather unusual case the charged persons were found to be possessed by certain minor demons, located in each case in a bodily organ. The general attitude thus was a sympathetic one. The prisoners were regarded

683 695 754 755 776 787

consonants. Vowels or diphthongs are also sometimes written before the consonant. 2/2 194

This system of accentuation is, however, not at all fixed, because of the lack of tonic accents. This is what explains the great number of synonyms, as far as spelling goes--synonyms which differ only in prominciation. It is therefore essential to know the meaning of the sentence in order to give it the necessary accentuation and the proper intonation.

It is easy to write, but reading it is fraught with difficulty. To be sure, the orthography is not very complicated, and after a certain time one can manage to write it fairly correctly.

The same is not true of Siamese, and the fixed rules of tonality which it has make it possible, when one has a firm grasp of them, to read all texts without understanding anything.

The Youn language. The Youn language which is in current usage in all of western Laos, [145] that is to say in the basin of the upper Ménam and in part of the Laotian Shan States, is Lao which has been modified graphically by the introduction of certain forms borrowed from the alphabetic signs of the Burmese language. There is no doubt but that it is a compound of the Thai language and that which was brought to Laos by the Pégouans and the Burmese and which underwent profound modifications on contact with Buddhism. [177]

What seems to lend credence to this hypothesis is that the Youn alphabet is used almost exclusively in all parts of Laos for the sacred books and manuscripts of the pagodas. It is a kind of transition between Pali, which is too little known and little suited to expressing the sounds of the Thai language, and this latter language itself which is regarded as too vulgar. A somewhat modified Youn alphabet was then created, and was reserved for religious writings, both texts and copies. A knowledge of this special alphabet is, in Laos, the mark of a superior degree of education. 2/2 776.

The Lu language. Like the preceding, the Lu language is complex and formed of the same elements. That is to say, it is due to the introduction of a Burmese graphic element into the already existing Thai element. In this way it has answered to new needs which resulted from the milieu and from social relations. 2/2 177

Thus the Lu language includes a certain number of Chinese, Kha and Burmese words which have been added to the original Thai mass.

The Lu alphabet includes twenty-six letters, twelve vowels and fourteen consonants.

779 thoughts of your previous life have been good. Thanks to these efforts you will pass successively, in your various incarnations, from the state of man to the state of holy man, then to that of saint and finally to that of Buddha or perfection, from which you will fall back into the mute and calm abyss, the void and eternal rest. Besides the constant effort of the will to raise itself, the good deeds which you accomplish will tend to the same purpose, whether they be deeds of action, of thought, of word or of intention.

"Anyone who, on the other hand, abandons himself to evil actions and makes no effort to raise himself gradually moves away from the state dreamed by Buddha, and his successive reincarnations occur in the opposite direction, descending into the bodies of animals which may be more or less maleficent and despicable.

"The above, however, are speculations to which the Laotian intelligence cannot rise. The Buddhist religion as practiced in Laos demands only a few outer signs of deference towards bonzes and holy places.

771 "Besides Buddhism, the Laotians have retained, or transformed into a cult, certain Spirits or Genii whom they call Phis, the in-
• 776 numerable deities of the Brahminic Pantheon by which Buddhism
782 was accompanied when it was imported into Laos and which have been reduced to a lesser stature.

"All the forces of nature, all that is capable of bringing disorder into life and every movement or phenomenon which the Laotian cannot explain is personified by a particular Genie or Spirit.

"The cult of these Phis may be summed up as follows: it is an interested exchange of gifts or sacrifices by men, in return for the goodwill, neutrality or help of the Phis. Oftentimes, when the Phi is not greatly dreaded, a bargain will be made with him which will be repaid after he has performed his part of the bargain. The cult of the Phis has a widespread following, and they have their lay priests who bear the title of guardians of the Genii.

771 "In addition to the cult of the Phis, which is nothing more nor
821 less than a form of polytheism, the Laotians are subject to rather numerous superstitions.

"Thus if an eclipse of the moon occurs Laotians imagine that a tiger is trying to devour it, and everyone at once begins to take turns banging on gongs, firing shots and using every means to make as much noise as possible so as to frighten off the aforesaid tiger and prevent it from swallowing the nocturnal star.

776 771 791 "The Laotians also believe that there are people who are possessed by the demon or who have [151] the evil eye. They call them 'Phi-pop.' When a person or family in a village is so regarded by the other inhabitants, they are forced to move and to go and live in one of the villages composed exclusively of Phi-pop" (1).

(1) Le Laos français, op. cit. [Lieutenant-colonel Tournier (Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

The boatmen and folk who dwell along the watercourses also believe in the existence of certain particular beings, as for example the Siren or "Nguoc." The siren, whom some people claim to have seen (?), is said to have the form of a snake with paws and an enormous head surmounted by a red, saw-toothed crest. It is supposed to have seven nostrils in a single nose, and a mouth provided with several rows of teeth. The scales which cover it and the lobes of its tail are said to be able to clash against one another and make a great deal of noise.

791 In times of public calamity, the "Tho-Nguoc" assumes a human voice and announces important events or cataclysms to come.

754 683 The "Phi-pop," to whom we have referred above, have, according to popular belief, the power of casting spells and causing the death of animals and even persons by means of their incantations, their practices or their glance. The natives say that they can reduce a buffalo hide to the size of a grain of rice and thus make a person swallow it. Once in the stomach the hide is supposed to regain its natural volume and cause the death of the person who has swallowed it by making the stomach burst after intolerable suffering. It goes without saying that the "Phi-pop" who is the cause of the evil can, in return for certain gifts, arrest the suffering and deliver the patient before death overtakes him. A person who believes he has swallowed a buffalo hide falls prey to a kind of madness and commits all sorts of extravagances, to such a point that his neighbors try to get him out of the village and get rid of him, for he has become a "Phi-pop" in his turn. People claim that there is only one way to find out if a man is possessed, and that is to throw him into the water with his feet and hands tied. If he floats he is not possessed, but if [152] the opposite proves to be the case--and this is what invariably happens--then a "Phi-pop" is really present and his disappearance is regarded as a blessing.

as a blessing.

One fact worthy of note is that the "Phi-pop"--men, women and even adolescents--are extremely intelligent folk with lively eyes and full of a strong will and energy. They know [Illustration here] a host of recipes and therapeutic formulas which have been handed down to them by their parents. They might be described as bonesetters or people who have medicine as a sideline, and who act on weak minds and nervous temperaments by the power of suggestion. "Phi-pop" women and girls are usually quite pretty.

One of the methods most widely used to gain the favor of the "Phis" is to play deafening music.

"It is not at all unusual to hear diabolic and uninterrupted music in a Laotian house for several days and nights running. In this house there is a person who is seriously ill. All the noise is designed to frighten or to assuage the spirit in the sick person's body and to persuade or force it to [153] leave the body of the invalid. The sick person generally succumbs under the waves of this curative but noisy harmony" (1).

(1) Le Laos français, op. cit. [Lieutenant-colonel Tournier (Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

Religion of the Thais. They have neither pagodas nor bonzes, but practice ancestor worship and have a great veneration for the "Spirits or Genii," to whom they make offerings on all occasions.

In the first room of the house there stands a bamboo altar. The "Spirits" or "Phis" of dead forbears are supposed to inhabit this altar, which is composed of two different levels, the highest one for the male Phis and the other for the female Phis. At its foot there is an opening covered with an elliptical wooden ornament shaped like a mouth. It is there, on this "ancestors' mouth," that the head of the family places offerings and prayers, especially when a member of the family is sick. In principal an animal is never killed without some scrap of food or a few drops of blood being offered to the ancestors' mouth.

"Spirits, whether genii or demons, are everywhere--in the sky, on earth, in the forests, in the water. They are the object of a widespread cult over which individuals who might be described as

776 lay priests preside. These lay priests, or rather these servants of the
793 Spirits, correspond to the Guardians of the Genii in the Buddhist
religion. Usually they exercise their ministry only when one of
755 their countrymen falls sick or dies.

"In case of a serious illness the servant of the Spirits goes to the sick person's house, goes to his side and recites a few prayers. Then he takes a bowl of uncooked rice on which he stands an egg with the smallest end upwards. With his right hand the officiant drops a certain number of grains of rice on the point of the egg, performing this operation three times in all. If the same number of grains of rice remain on the point of the egg each time, this means that a "Spirit" has entered the sick person's body.

787 "By means of similar maneuvers, the Spirit is then questioned to find out what he wants to eat. Depending on the answer, a buffalo, an ox or a pig may be killed. The designated animal is slaughtered and then scorched without being skinned so as to destroy the hairs which cover it. The entrails are taken out and carefully washed [154] in running water, then replaced in the animal's body. The victim is taken to the altar of the Spirits, which is located outside the village, and placed with its head towards the altar. Then prayers are said asking the Spirit to cure the sick person. When the ceremony is over the animal is taken back to the village, where it is cut into pieces and divided among all the inhabitants. The invalid rarely gets well.

"There are also sorcerers and witches among the Thais, who are consulted in circumstances of lesser importance.

[775] "The Thais believe in metempsychosis, although their ideas on the subject are not very clear" (1).

(1) Le Laos français, op. cit. [Lieutenant-colonel Tournier (Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

771 Religion of the Khas. Among the Khas, even those who practice
782 Buddhism, the only existing religion is a religion of "Phis" which is
776 similar to the Thai belief in "Spirits, Genii and Demons." The outer manifestations of this cult consist of offerings of rice, flowers and fruit, but never include sacrifices of animals. Small shelters which affect the form of an ordinary house are built at the entrance to villages to receive propitiatory offerings destined for the "Phi".

the "Phi."

It is said that each of us has his good and his evil genie which are engaged in a constant struggle, and that we are good or evil according as the one or the other gains the upper hand. This is a kind of symbolism of good and evil, but here the controlling and guiding conscience is replaced by the influences of the moment, the occasion, the circumstances and the milieu.

Each house also has its own "genie", reminiscent of the Roman Lares, to which sacrifices and offerings are made on every possible occasion.

The evil "Phis" are more dreaded and receive a great many more offerings than the good "Phis," with whom no trouble need be taken.

In each village there is a sorcerer to explain the actions of the "Phis" and teach the way to gain their favor. Although consultations with them are not free of charge these sorcerers, who are called Mo-hou-ha, Mo-Phi or Phi-pop depending on the province, are just as [155] [Illustration] [156] [Blank page] [157] highly regarded as the "Guardians of the Genii" of the Buddhist religion and, like them, are exempt from servitude and taxes.

In times of epidemic all responsibility is attributed to the evil "Phis", and in order to make them take flight the men of the villages beat on the roofs of their houses with long bamboo poles until such time as the "Phis" are supposed to have disappeared.

The Khas have retained a belief in metempsychosis which is tinged with certain rather vague superstitions bearing on a future life and some kind of resurrection. But this second existence is not everyone's privilege, and will exist only insofar as one's life has been a good one.

They also believe in the existence of a place of torment where perjurers, murderers, etc. will remain for all eternity. To be sure, they believe in a general way that a new life will begin and that it will be a reward or a punishment for the individual's deeds in his last incarnation. Thus a brave and good man will return as a happy and respected chieftain. Others will be entitled only to an animal existence, the importance of which in the scale of being will be like a personification of their faults and merits. One odd fact is that women always want to return in the guise of a man.

Religion of the Lus. The religion practiced by the Lus is a form of Buddhism which has been mitigated by certain local customs

779 "The prince heir to the throne Mugapakkha remained dumb until he was thirteen years old. He recovers his speech at the moment when his father wants to bury him alive. He then explains his previous silence by showing that an inconsiderate word may be the cause of great torment in future existences for him who has uttered it." And the Sama Jataka:

"Sama who fed his father and mother, who were both blind, dies of a wound inflicted unintentionally by king Kusi who was deer hunting. As Sama is dying, he entrusts his murderer to break the news to his parents, who lament so painfully that Sakkha is moved and brings Sama back to life."

But of all, the most popular is unquestionably the Pha Vet, the Laotian name for the Vessantara Jataka. (Cf. below Boun Pha Vet).

There exists another series of Jatakas which rival the five hundred Jatakas in popularity. It is the Pannasajataka (Ha Sip Xat) or the fifty Jatakas. This very peculiar text is found in [29] all the literature of western Indochina, and was probably composed in Thai country. Versions exist in Burmese, Khmer, Siamese and Laotian. The Laotian rendition has the peculiarity of containing 27 out of 50 tales which are not found in any other version. These 27 stories are entirely original. They are at the moment in the process of being translated.

Finally the five hundred Laotian Jatakas form a convenient framework into which all kinds of stories in the current language have been inserted. Their study will doubtless prove a mine of information on local folklore.

THE PHI

771 We cannot conclude the chapter relating to the religion of Laos without mentioning the cult of the Phi.

776 In his books "La Participation" and "L'Evolution humaine" the late lamented Jean Przyluski distinguished three successive phases of religion which, according to him, are related to an economic and social state.

When man is a collector of food, that is, when he lives from what he can gather or hunt or fish, his religion is vegetalism or totemism. When he becomes a producer, man's religion becomes agrarian, honoring the gods of vegetation, of the earth, the forests, etc., and particularly the protecting genie of the village. Finally, in the period of urban communities, universal gods appear.

While some reservations might be made on this classification, it does nevertheless offer a convenient framework in which we can

include all the local genii one comes across in Indochina, either under the name of Neak Ta in Cambodia, or Phi in Laos, to mention only two countries. The cult of the Phi is still very much alive in Laos, although it has long been contested by the Buddhist clergy and forbidden by an edict of Phothisarath in 1527.

[30] But there are several classes of phi. First of all there are the universal phi, those are the ones which Buddhist tradition has attempted to assimilate for better or worse.

The book of Khun Bolom says precisely that the Phi Fa (Phi of heaven) and the Phi Then are in reality Indra, and the guardians of the four worlds. The Phi Sua Muon are Nang Tholani (Dharani, goddess of the earth) and Nang Mekhala (Manimekhala, deity of the sea). Finally there is the Phi Then Ten (Visvakarman, the builder).

The local protecting genii of the kingdom of Lan Xan are the fifteen Nagaraja (Praya Nak) who are the genii of water, living in the river rapids, at the confluence of rivers, on the rocks on the river banks or in caves. Their natural form is that of a serpent, but they can also take on human form.

Then follow the familiar genii, the wandering phi (Phi Pho), and the phi of dwellings (Phi Heuan). The Phi Heuan are honored at the time of marriage, and the Laotian code prescribes the indemnities which must be paid to please the Phi. There are also the phi of parents [or relatives--Translator] (Phi Me). These are often confused with the preceding ones. Their cult is celebrated either inside the house, or outside in a small shelter built for this purpose. This little structure is usually built leaning against a tree; sometimes it contains a small statuette or a stone, or even nothing. In that case one finds only a few grains of glutinous rice, and one or two small sticks of incense in a horn made of a banana leaf. This little house is the home of the Phi. He watches the living from the beyond and manifests himself every time a member of the family behaves badly. His intervention is most often known by a sudden and serious illness. One must then try to find out what has displeased the phi. For this one goes to the "sorcerer" and he will indicate [31] the sacrifice which must be made to the phi to appease his anger."

There exist also village phi to whom honor and offerings are due at the time of every ritual or local ceremony, particularly about the seventh month. Coinciding with a sort of pause in the ordinary activity of the Laotian, a pause which is regulated by a change in season, return of the rains and the rise of the Mekong waters, the feasts of the "months of the spirits" are centered around the evocation

776 of one or several spirits who are reincarnated in one possessed. This
796 person enables the villagers and those living in the same quarter to
787 know the course of the new year and, if necessary, to improve it by means of gifts and prayers. During this time the village is forbidden to strangers (Lévy).

776 A series of particularly dangerous phi is also known; these are
775 the Phi Phetu (Sk: Preta), that is the wandering souls of people who have died in an abnormal way, by accident, suicide, childbirth for a woman, etc. These souls cannot be born again. They remain present in order to torment human beings. The Phi Houa Kout are
776 the headless phi, the Phi Khon Long are those who carry the coffins,
754 the Phi Pop have the power of entering into the body of a living human being. The unfortunate person then has the evil eye and is expelled from the village. In the region of Savannakhet, there is a village of victims of the Phi Pop which was created by a Protestant mission, in order to rescue these poor creatures who would otherwise die of hunger, for they are forbidden to enter any village.

The Phi Phong are the spirits of human beings who have studied the formulas to acquire magic powers but have not conformed strictly to certain rites prescribed by their studies. They are bloodthirsty and go out at night by the light of the fire [32] which issues from their nostrils along the banks of rivers and streams, and of ponds, to catch fish and toads. If one meets a Phi Phong, one must flee for he can spit in one's face, and then one may become a Phi Phong oneself.

776 The Phi Kong Koi lives in the mountains and has the shape of a monkey. During his existence on earth he was the servant of a Vietnamese. One day, having been too badly treated, he decided to escape. But in order not to be caught, he camouflaged his footprints by putting his heels in front and his toes behind. The Vietnamese, deceived by this trick, went off in the opposite direction and never found him. In our days when the Laotians want to chase [198] away the Phi Kong Koi, the speak Vietnamese to each other. But if one is traveling in the mountains, one must refrain from lighting a fire or cooking any fish or meat or crabs, for the odor attracts the phi who wants to come and eat. His victim would have his intestines split open. The approach of the phi is always preceded by a violent storm and a torrential rain. There are said to be a great many Phi King Koi in the region of Samneua.

There is, however, another kind of Phi. This one seems to have a particular hatred for archaeologists. These are the phis who inhabit sculptures or the tumuli which are found in the bush [en brousse]. But that is another story...